

SOCIALIST PARTY of GREAT BRITAIN

REPORT of the PROCEEDINGS of the 65th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

held at:

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, on FRIDAY, SATURDAY and  
SUNDAY, 4th, 5th and 6th April, 1969

Attendances at Conference:

		<u>Delegates present</u>	<u>Branches represented</u>
<u>Friday</u>	Morning	28	13
	Afternoon	32	14
<u>Saturday</u>		29	14
<u>Sunday</u>		25	12

Dartford, Hackney and Woolwich not represented.

Financial Statement

			<u>Income</u>
Collections	Friday		£16. 5. 6
"	" evening		£14. 1. 5
	Literature sales		£ 8.18.10
Collection	Sunday		£11.13. 8
Conference social (after expenditure):			£15.11. 1
Canteen			<u>£18.15. 0</u>
			£85. 5. 6
<u>Expenditure:</u>	Hall hire	£57.15. 0	
	Gratuities	£ 5. 0. 0	
	Delegates' fares	£23. 0. 0	
		<u>£85.15. 0</u>	
	Excess expenditure		<u>£ 9. 6</u>



Comrade J. Edmonds was elected as Chairman and Comrade H. Young as Vice Chairman. Standing Orders Committee acted as Tellers.

#### RESOLUTION

##### Manchester

"This Conference calls on the Executive Committee to set up a Committee to report to the 1969 Delegate Meeting with details of costs and probable advantages of employing a member full-time at H.O."

Cde. Crump, Manchester, opened up by pointing out the many advantages that would accrue from having a full-time member at Head Office. H.O. work cannot be done efficiently unless there is a member there all the time, particularly when we are contesting an Election when there are telephone calls most of the day from the National Press, B.B.C. etc. asking for information regarding Agents etc, information which is often wanted quickly. It is frustrating for callers to have to be referred to the telephone number of another comrade who may be at lunch or not available at the moment. He did not consider we should have a Provincial member as there needs to be a Provincial centre. The main question was of course the lack of money but we should make an effort to find this. Other small organisations manage to do this. He had reason to believe that there are volunteers who would come forward. We should at least decide to have one.

Mrs. Herts. were opposed to the resolution although they were agreed as to the necessity: but it was all very well to appoint a committee only to find there was no-one available - which appeared to be the position at the moment. The Party should look into the present organisation at Head Office as there seemed to be a lack of communication between members.

Resolution Carried 23 - 14

#### ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

##### Camden (Bloomsbury)

"Consideration of the effectiveness of Delegate Meetings from the point of view of the venue, time schedule and the possibility of building them into more interesting meetings".

Comrade F. Lawrence for Camden said that the Branch would like the Delegate Meeting to be held at Conway Hall. We needed to make these meetings more stimulating than they had been in recent years. Head Office is much too informal. The extension of time which is possible at H.O. is not necessarily a good thing: we should fix a time schedule and stick to it, and from this point of view Conway Hall is better.

Other points made were that the main reason why Delegate Meetings are sometimes boring is that too many Branches have not read their E.C. Report and therefore there are often no questions asked on Publicity, Education etc. It was also pointed out that the seating accommodation for delegates at Conway Hall is inadequate and this can be avoided at Head Office.

Nothing resolved.

##### Manchester

"The E.C.'s handling of a complaint about Comrade R. Lees by five members".

Manchester Branch did not wish to discuss the case of the five members, which was incidental, but the way in which the E.C. had acted on a complaint against a member. Five members wrote to the E.C. that Comrade Lees (Central Branch) was taking a highly critical attitude of the Party and said that he had issued a leaflet which did not conform to the Party's case. Comrade Lees had voiced to Manchester members at last Conference that he rejects the D. of P. and that he would not vote for an S.F.G.B. candidate, which the five members reported to the E.C. This is a serious complaint to make against a member, which the whole of the Manchester Branch endorsed. It was considered that the E.C. had been very inept in dealing with the matter, allowing it to drag on for months, and only after considerable delay, had removed his name from the "S.S." Contacts Directory. The E.C. should decide whether these accusations are valid or not. Comrade Knight said that Comrade Lees should have been required to give an immediate reply under the terms of Rules 31 and 33.

Comrade Baldwin, E.C. member, stated that, in fairness to the E.C., there appeared to be some correspondence from Manchester Branch which had not reached the E.C. He was not aware, himself, of Comrade Lees' opposition to the D. of P.



He stressed the difficulty of getting replies to letters from Comrade Lees and that when he did write no mention was made of the E.C. had already prevented the issue of further leaflets without their approval, they felt that in the circumstances no further action was necessary.

There was some discussion as to whether Rules 31 and 33 were the right machinery for dealing with this matter and a suggestion was made that the E.C. should review the whole situation and ask Comrade Lees whether he still holds the same views. As we seemed to have difficulty in getting replies from Comrade Lees the position was not clear.

Resolution Carried 18 - 0

Floor Res.

J. Crump

"That the Executive Committee review the complaint against H. McLaughlin Comrade Lees in the light of the previous resolution" (above).

Carried 14 - 8

Westminster

"Possible regionalisation of Central Branch with area secretaries and the more active participation of such members in Party work on an organised basis, including periodic meetings".

Haringey

"That Central Branch be divided into regional correspondence Branches".

These two items were taken together. Comrade May stated that the possible regionalisation of Central Branch is in no way a reflection on the way the present C.B. Secretary is doing his work. At present the total number of Central Branch members constitutes almost a quarter of the total strength of the Party and one member, Comrade Lawrence, is in charge of 150 of them. Central Branch members say they feel out of things, which is natural. The time has now arrived when we might consider whether something could be done about this. It would be a mistake, however, to rush things and have, say, eight regional Branches, but we could perhaps do something in the West of England where there are a considerable number of C.B. members. We should go forward slowly, using a map which would pinpoint where the strength of Central Branch lies. We could perhaps have two meetings a year for the members in that region at a convenient spot, together with the possibility of a member from London going down to hold an indoor meeting at the same time. We could also consider with Comrade Lawrence the possibility of getting out a quarterly news-letter for the area.

Comrade Lawrence, Secretary, Central Branch, said that to destroy the Central Branch set-up as it is now would be a pity. Out of the 200 members in Central Branch about half of them do read the E.C. Report to Conference, and it is certainly true that members living apart do often get together. A member recently joined in Rugby and he was immediately put in touch with another member. Members in the North are looked after by Comrade Crump and Glasgow Branch have a list of C.B. members living near Glasgow. It is nonsense to say that C.B. members never see one another. It is very important not to lose your Head Office contact here.

It was suggested that members in different parts of the country should be got together once a year to deal with the Conference Agenda and appoint a delegate to speak at Conference. This would be a start. Attention was also drawn to the difficulty of defining the various regions and the difficulties of transport.

Other points made were that the Party should be divided into Regional Branches - many more members in the Provinces are now joining the Party and we should have more propaganda for them. It was stressed that Westminster Branch did not wish to divorce Comrade Lawrence from Central Branch but to work closely with the Regional Secretaries.

Floor Res.

K. Knight

"That the Executive Committee consider the re-organisation of J. Mattingley Central Branch on a regional basis".

Carried 20 - 3

Comrade Crump stated that there was no report from the Vetting Committee for new applicants to Central Branch. He would have liked some statistics, i.e. the percentage of rejections and acceptances. The General Secretary then read their report which had been received too late for incorporation in the E.C. Report to Conference. He also stated that the E.C. had never been asked for this information but that it should now be possible to get it from the Publicity Committee and also from the Head Office Assistant.



Overseas Contacts. The Overseas Contacts Secretary, Cde. Goodman, had little to add to her report except to mention a promising French contact, George Valentino, who would like to form a Companion Party. He has been met by both Comrades Carter and Buick. He has also had a lot of correspondence with the Publicity Committee and has translated an article for the International Journal. The E.C. has agreed to pay his fare and he may be able to visit this country shortly.

Jamaica. These comrades are in urgent need of tape recordings and she urged that every effort be made to send them recordings of Branch discussions. They would not be used for public meetings but only for internal discussion.

Manchester "Is the Socialist Party functioning as a revolutionary Organisation?"

Comrade Crump, Manchester, expressed his concern as to the degree of commitment of our members compared with other organisations. In comparison with other small groups (which consider themselves revolutionary) the amount of activity in the Party is not good. "International Socialism" takes all its members 2/6d. a week, "Socialist Labour League" members cough up 20/- a week. "International Socialism" sells about 30,000 copies a week of its paper and the "Socialist Labour League" about 18,000 a week. We should make more effort to get out on the streets to sell our literature. Too many members work on the assumption that we have a case, worked out in 1904, and that all we have to do is to work as propagandists till the working class wake up. We should continue to examine our ideas. We have not continued the work which Marx and Engels started. We are not examining our case and improving on it. Our image outside the Party is of 'arm-chair socialists', which is completely justified - we are not functioning in the way a revolutionary organisation should.

Various aspects of this matter were discussed - many of these so-called Left Wing groups are short-lived: they are short-cut merchants with spates of enthusiasm and a rapid change of personnel. Our stability is based on conviction and understanding and all our activities are directed towards a revolutionary end. All members of the Party are not in a position to speak or even to sell literature and we should not set too high an aim as to what is expected of them. Membership alone is of some value. Many small organisations have paid or full-time organisers in the regions: they have distribution points for their literature. They also have ways and means of getting these facilities, which are not open to us. The root of the problem is not whether we are functioning properly as a revolutionary Party but whether we think socialism is a present practical proposition, reasonably likely in our own life-time. We should also not be obsessed with the idea that every time some left-winger produces a booklet it is incumbent on us to publish a booklet against it. For 64 years we have published the "Socialist Standard", which is about 10,000 pages of regular and consistent socialist propaganda, and which is available to all these people who produce booklets. They do not write because they want to change the world but because they want to see themselves in print. These people often know the Party's case. We should appeal to the working class. Not enough was done at other political meetings and members should keep their eyes open and make an effort to sell our literature there.

The General Secretary here read the fraternal greetings to Conference which had been received from our Companion Parties, mentioning at the same time that Comrade Fenton of the W.S.P.U.S.A. was once again with us and also Comrade Alec Hart from South Africa:

Socialist Party of New Zealand, Wellington.

*World* Workers Socialist Party of U.S.

C.E.C. of the Socialist Party of Canada

Socialist Party of Canada, Winnipeg.

S.P. of Austria. Comrade Vogt, Secretary, wrote that although they were unable to report an increase in their membership they had nevertheless increased the number of regular subscribers to the I.F.W. and continue to sponsor activities in Germany and Switzerland where there are a good contacts. He hoped that some closer contact could be arranged between all the Companion Parties.

A letter was also read from Comrade Frank, of Austria, who is now well again after an operation in hospital. He sent his cordial greetings. The Conference agreed to return fraternal greetings to all Companion Parties.



FINANCE In reply to a question from Comrade Knight regarding the absence of a Treasurer's report, the General Secretary informed delegates that the Treasurer reports monthly to the E.C. showing the position of the Party's finances in both the Current and Deposit Accounts. At the moment the Party had £838 in the Current Account and £1,696.17. 0 in the Deposit Account.

Floor Res. "That the Executive Committee look into the question of appointing  
K. Knight a Party Funds Organiser in view of the present financial position  
J. Atkinson of the Party, and consider the possibility of a levy on Party members".

There was little opposition to the idea of appointing a Party Funds Organiser but some doubts were expressed regarding a levy on Party members. It would be difficult to collect as we cannot compel members to pay: quite a few members did not even pay dues.

Carried 16 - 10

EDUCATION CLASSES. One delegate said that the E.C. Report gives the impression that there was no activity in this connection during the year. In fact, there had been classes and an autumn school. It was suggested that, failing a report from the Classes Organiser the E.C. should see that some information is included.

Comrade Fenton, W.S.P.U.S.A., here made a short speech from the platform where he was introduced and welcomed by the Chairman.

Manchester Branch.

Rule 3. Comrade Atkinson, Manchester, drew attention to the fact that this Rule had been included by the Party because many years ago a member of the S.P.G.B. while living in America, had written articles in a Social Democratic journal which the Party felt was detrimental to the Party's case. Manchester Branch considered that the rule should no longer stand. The working class is a world-wide class whose class interests are identical and we should not look at ourselves merely as an organisation in Gt. Britain. He was supported by two other delegates who said that the tremendous improvement in transport and means of communication made it comparatively easy to keep in close contact with members: also that comrades do like to feel they belong, especially in a country where there is no Companion Party.

Against this it was stated that we are a political organisation, organised to establish socialism in this part of the world through the political machinery. It is not just a question of retaining control over members but we aim at capturing political power and we cannot do this in, say America. A member of the socialist movement in this country takes on a certain responsibility along the lines of the principles he has agreed to, and should be able to discharge that responsibility to the particular organisation to which he belongs. A member abroad cannot belong to a Branch and Branch control cannot be effective. He may also have to take part in activities in another country which we would not agree with. It is unfair to place a member in that position. No Res.

Westminster

"Branch membership to be more closely reflected in Conference delegations and the suggestion to alter Rule 22 to read "one additional delegate for every further five members"(instead of ten as at present)".

Comrade Goodman, Westminster, said that the Branch felt that this change would make delegations more representative of Branch strength and result in a livelier Conference, especially as the larger Branches tend to be more active.

It was argued, however, that this would work in favour of the London Branches to the detriment of the Provinces: also that some London Branches would find it difficult to send more than two delegates - some Branches at the moment are not even represented at all.

Nothing resolved.



AMENDMENTS TO RULE

- (Westminster Branch: RULE 12. "Delete all after 'E.C' on line six and insert  
( 'only by a further call for nominations and  
( subsequent ballot '".  
(Westminster Amendt: "Delete all after 'shall be filled' and insert  
( 'only by.....'".  
( not taken.
- Camden (B): RULE 12: "Delete the last sentence commencing 'vacancies'  
and insert instead 'A call for nominations shall be  
made for vacancies occurring on the E.C. during  
the year". Lost 10 - 31
- Camden (B): RULE 19: "Insert in line five after the word 'Committee'  
'subject to the E.C. being authorised to appoint the  
Assistant Secretary, Assistant Treasurer, Central  
Organiser, Auditors and Trustees, if no nominations  
are received when the annual call is made for Party  
Officers". Carried 23 - 19
- Manchester: RULE 22 "Delete all after 'ten members' on line four".  
Manchester Amendt. "Delete two sentences after ten members on line 4".  
Lost 21 - 23
- Haringey Amendt. "Add - "...down to 'Conference' in line six".  
Lost 15 - 20
- Mid.Herts. RULE 23 "Delete 'at least twelve weeks before Annual  
Conference the E.C.' and replace by - 'The retiring  
E.C. at its last meeting'".
- Withdrawn.
- Westminster RULE 23 "Delete all from 'at least...' to 'Branches for' on  
line three, and insert - 'The E.C. shall ensure that  
17 weeks prior to Annual Conference Branches are  
asked for...' delete 'nine' on line five and insert  
'eleven', delete 'three' on line 7 and insert 'five',  
delete 'three on line 9 and insert 'five'".  
Carried 27 - 16
- Manchester RULE 28: "Delete all after 'Constituency'".  
Manchester Amendt. "Delete all after 'Constituency in line four".  
Taken as one - Lost 18 - 25
- Swansea RULE 28: "Delete all after 'Constituency' in line four".  
Lost 17 - 25
- Westminster RULE 28: "Delete all after the word 'Constituency' in line 4  
and add - 'Where possible Party members shall sign  
candidates' nomination papers. Failing sufficient  
members being available, sympathisers, 'S.S'  
subscribers and other non-members may sign subject  
to the approval of the Branch, or if no Branch  
exists in that area, subject to the approval of the  
E.C". Lost 8 - 35
- Mid.Herts. Amendt. RULE 28: "Delete - sympathiser, 'Socialist Standard'  
subscribers and other non-members' and replace with -  
'known sympathisers". Lost 11 - 31



AMENDMENTS TO RULE (Contd):

- 1780-80
- Westminster NEW RULE: "Any new rule, or amendment to rule, carried at Annual Conference shall not be the subject matter of a Party Poll during the twelve months following that Conference".
- Westminster Amendt. "Delete all after the word 'Poll' on the last line and insert "During the period up to the next Annual Conference".  
Lost 10 - 32
- Manchester NEW RULE: "Conference resolutions are the final arbiters in making Party decisions. Party Polls are for use only in National or Party emergencies and cannot reverse Conference decisions".  
Lost 3 - 37
- Swansea Amendt. "Add - 'after decisions' "Except under Rules 26 and 33".  
Lost 3 - 39
- Westminster Amendt. "Delete all after 'Party decisions' and insert "Party Polls must not be called for to challenge decisions reached at the previous Conference except in cases of emergency arising out of an entirely new set of circumstances not envisaged when the Conference decision was reached".  
Lost 8 - 34

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

S. W. London: "Comrade Young and Conference Procedure".

Comrade Young said that most of the boring and trivial nature of some of the discussion at Conference may be due to the procedure itself. He instanced the 'price of the "S.S.", 'H.O. premises', and the preference for publishing certain pamphlets rather than others. The day-to-day running of the Party should be delegated to sub-Committees. Conference should be discussing ideas. He suggested that we should do as other organisations do - have all the executives on the platform, seated in front of the delegates, to be questioned on anything which comes up. We might even have a 'presidential address': or that the E.C. could entrust a member or group of members, or even the whole of the E.C. to draw up a statement on the preceding year's work, in reference to the general political and economic situation, to be presented to Conference - at present this sort of thing only comes up by accident. If something was done along these lines more outside people might attend. Our domestic matters do not concern them. Conference should be the central point of the year's work for the Party to inform and lead members along the right lines.

The General Secretary spoke about the results of the 1967 sub-Committee set up to consider Conference procedure, a report which had been circulated to Branches for discussion and comment. Only four Branches had sent in their considered views to the E.C. One suggestion of the Committee was that Conference should be brought forward to the commencement of the year and the election of sub-Committees dealt with at that time, so that all sub-Committees and officers of the Party would be working in unison with one another. At present the E.C. Report to Conference is compiled by a new Secretary who has taken over for half the year from the previous General Secretary, and it is most difficult to give Conference a comprehensive review of the work done. This recommendation of the Committee had been turned down overwhelmingly by the Party. As for locale, we need a hall which is central and cheap and allows us a certain amount of freedom. Conway Hall meets these requirements. To find a hall in another part of London is extremely difficult while we are tied to Easter. We could possibly find a small hall in the north area of London but we would have to move Conference date to before or after Easter. The Committee also suggested that instead of the lengthy E.C. Report which is in fact a collection of sub-Committee reports approved by the E.C. and presented as their Report, the General Secretary, in conjunction with the E.C. should collate these into a fresh one and that the sub-Committees themselves or Party Officers should appoint spokesmen to speak at Conference on their past work and on what they were planning to do.



Conference Procedure (Contd):

Regarding the alteration of the Rules, this is a very boring and trying part of Conference, voting on amendments already discussed and instructed at Branch level. The Committee suggested that these instructions from Branches should be sent to the Standing Orders Committee with their recommendations and voting. The Committee would collate them and announce to Conference that a particular rule has been carried or lost by a certain number of voters. This, however, had been turned down by the last Conference. In fact, the Branches did not follow up any of the Committee's suggestions.

In discussion, delegates were reminded that Easter is the time when Party members are free from work and we should bear this in mind when considering whether to move Conference forward or backwards in time. It is easier for London members to attend than for Provincial members. It was also pointed out that it is just as important to consider the rules of the Party as theoretical problems, and that what may seem to one member a trivial matter is important to another. There was also a suggestion that Conference might commence with a member giving an exposition of the current economic situation, level of employment, trade figures, etc.

Floor Res.

T.Lord

K.Knight

"That the 1967 Conference sub-Committee Report be brought before the next Delegate Meeting and any suggestions the Executive Committee may have to improve the working of Conference".

Carried 15 - nil

RESOLUTIONWestminster:

"This Conference instructs the Executive Committee to take immediate and positive steps to endeavour to bring about a reconciliation of the two sections of the socialist movement in Canada".

This resolution was included by Westminster Branch because it seemed to them that in spite of long reports from the preceding General Secretary the E.C. had taken no positive action in the matter.

The General Secretary read the E.C.'s resolution of 18th March, 1969, i.e.

"That the S.P. of Canada and the W.S.P. of Canada be written to and asked if it is now possible for them both to come together on the basis of their agreement with the Object and Declaration of Principles as accepted by the Companion Parties, to find grounds of common agreement based on socialist fraternity and goodwill and endeavour to form themselves into a single Socialist Party".

(Carried 10 - 0).

Comrade Fenton of the W.S.P.U.S. reminded delegates that the S.P.G.B. is involved in something from 5,000 miles away and that they themselves would no doubt pass a similar resolution. But he felt that the issue was one that could not be solved merely by sanctimonious resolutions. The problem was an extremely complicated and difficult one.

Resolution ~~Carried~~ 19 - 22

Comrade Fenton went on to say with regard to the W.S.P.U.S. that the Party had taken on a few more members. They had managed to employ a full-time General Secretary. They now had someone on the premises all day to answer mail and meet people. It seemed to be working satisfactorily.

RESOLUTIONHaringey

"That a Party Poll using the transferable vote be held to decide which of the following descriptions the Party should use on Nomination Papers in national and local elections - S.P.G.B., The Socialist Party, The Socialist Party of Great Britain, The World Socialist Party".

Mid.Herts.

Amend.

"Delete in line one 'using the transferable vote' and delete in lines four and five 'The Socialist Party, The World Socialist Party'".

Comrade Carter, Haringey, said the Branch felt the Party should make a unified decision in this matter. It is a matter of policy that should not be left to the E.C. on the first occasion the choice of description arises, probably in 1970. It was important that all members should use the same description.



It was felt by one or two delegates that the matter did not warrant a Party Poll. It was pointed out that the Party's name is the Socialist Party of Great Britain, not The Socialist Party nor the World Socialist Party. One delegate saw the resolution as a veiled attempt to change the Party's name to the World Socialist Party. This was emphatically denied by Haringey Branch. The Branch is merely concerned that now we are faced with a new situation we should take the best advantage of it. Attention was drawn to the fact that the Bill has not yet been passed and that if a Party Poll should be decided on we should hold back until the Bill is through. The Central Organiser, who thought that the matter was not worth a Party Poll, said that when the legislation becomes law it will need a lot more discussion by the Party. He instanced the possibility of the W.S.P. of Ireland contesting an election in Northern Ireland to send a member to Westminster. Presumably the ballot papers would have described him as a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain!

Amendment Lost 11 - 31  
Resolution Lost 5 - 37

#### LITERATURE

#### ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

S.W. London: "Vetting procedure for new Party Pamphlets".

S.W. London Branch felt that the vetting of new Party Pamphlets should not be done by the whole of the E.C. Comrade Hardy, Pamphlets Committee, said that at present a draft is put before E.C. members who read it through at their leisure. Invariably there are alterations and suggestions and it has to go back to the Pamphlets Committee. He felt this was a necessary procedure if the Party wants something which has the approval of the majority of members of the E.C. A delegate from Manchester expressed amazement and regret at the E.C.'s failure to implement the publication of Martov's "The State and the Socialist Revolution" which they had pressed for at the last Delegate Meeting and which the D.M. had recommended. Comrade Grant, E.C. member, said that the Party has recently been given to understand that Comrade Orner of the W.S.P. U.S. is trying to get the plates from the original publisher when he will get a new edition out at his own expense.

#### RESOLUTION

##### Westminster

"This Conference is disturbed that no new pamphlets have been published for over twelve months and instructs the E.C. to take all steps to ensure publication of (i) "Questions of the Day" and (ii) "Socialism and War" before the summer propaganda season, and that the necessary sum of money be put on one side for this purpose".

S.W. London, Amendt. "Add the following - (iii) "Principles and Policy" and delete all after the word before".

Comrade MacDowall for the Pamphlets Committee, said that the Committee has to consider the priorities for pamphlets very carefully. There are a number of pamphlets which the Party says we must produce and the E.C. have to decide what must be done. Regarding "Principles and Policy", the Pamphlets Cttee. had attempted to revise it, to up-date its language and so on. This was found impossible to do successfully. The E.C. then said that it should be re-written. A member had promised to do this but ran into trouble and had to drop it. We now have another comrade who is going ahead with it.

"Questions of the Day". The draft is now before the E.C. and ready for vetting.

The E.C. has turned down the title 'Questions of the Day' and a new title has still to be considered. It should be in the hands of the printers within the next six weeks.

"War". A number of chapters were completed two years ago. The final chapters except one have been written and are being typed. In two or three months it should be before the E.C.



"Education" The comrade who has been writing this is making progress but no firm date can be given.

"Religion". Five chapters have already been written.

Comrade Ballard, Westminster, stressed the urgent need for the pamphlets "War" and "Questions of the Day" - particularly the one on War. Many opportunities over the last year or so had been lost for lack of this pamphlet. The Branch felt that money should be set aside for this purpose. Another delegate thought it was bad policy to keep Party money locked away for a specific purpose. Pamphlets were not likely to be held up for lack of money. When a pamphlet is ready for production we should say to the Party - we need X pounds to cover the cost: a specific appeal like this is an excellent stimulus for getting the money. But it not good that propaganda activities etc. could perhaps be restricted because money was earmarked for a pamphlet.

Amendment Lost 17 - 19  
Resolution Carried 28 - 9

A question was raised regarding the lack of a report from the Central Literature Sales Committee - Conference would have appreciated a report showing the successes we have had with our sales of literature. Comrade Garnham, for the Committee, said that it was very difficult to get members to serve on this Cttee, which was consequently very short-handed. They had, however, had a very successful year in 1968.

#### ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Lewisham: "The inevitability of Socialism".

Comrade Zucconi opened up by saying that a member had joined S.W. London Branch and within a short space of time had resigned apparently on the grounds that socialism was not inevitable and he wanted to join a more progressive movement. His Form F. was sent to the E.C. who had sent it back to the Branch on the grounds that socialism was not inevitable. There appeared to be some confusion here. S.W. London Branch consider that socialism is inevitable - that is the Party's case. If you look at Party literature you find it assumes that capitalism will continue. Society is not static: it is moving all the time and people are continuing to try to change it. Workers will eventually be forced to look to socialism to solve the problems of war, poverty and exploitation. Was capitalism itself inevitable? If you take the development of capitalism you find it was because feudal society could not contain the developing productive forces and the feudal relations had to be burst asunder. This is the position we are in today. We do not say that socialism will come about without workers reacting to their material conditions and our contention is that the working class will inevitably want socialism and will be driven to institute it.

The General Secretary read a letter from the E.C. to S.W. London Branch regarding the member who had joined S.W. London Branch and very shortly resigned. Part of this comrade's letter was that he could not accept the Party's view of the inevitability of socialism. The Form F. was returned to the Branch by the E.C. who asked why the Branch had not made a more positive effort to clear up the misunderstanding on the question of the inevitability of socialism written by this member in his letter of resignation.

It was said on behalf of the E.C. that some E.C. members had in fact stated that if the working class did not become conscious of the cause of their problems the expanding Forces of destruction could possibly destroy us, but that nevertheless their view was that the working class will sooner or later come to grips with the real nature of their problems and tackle them. There is nothing mechanistic about this. Some discussion followed but the general views expressed were to the effect that not only past history, but the present political climate is in our favour, that man makes his own history and this is determined by material conditions. Socialism will not come through the back door - it depends on the activities of men, and the material conditions under which they live will force men to try to change them.



PUBLICITY

Comrade Ambridge, Swansea, wished to draw attention to two aspects of publicity: one was a complaint regarding the French leaflet in connection with which he put forward a resolution from the floor:

"That this Conference deprecates the action of the E.C. in issuing leaflets for distribution in France without first making sure of the means for distributing same". (Ambridge & Toll).

He said that we had learned from the Press in 1968 that there was considerable unrest in France - a number of workers had gone on strike etc. and that the E.C. had considered the situation was worth the issue of 10,000 leaflets in French to be distributed in France. His Branch had been very concerned as to how these leaflets were going to be distributed satisfactorily and as to what would be the cost - which turned out to be £75. When the E.C. were asked for names and addresses they were told they had been sent to youth hostels in and around France, Luxemburg, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy and Spain. Also to garages and routier cafes. He pointed out that guests at French hostels have to be non-political, garage proprietors are only concerned to sell petrol and that some of these countries did not even speak French. The E.C.'s reply had been that the French leaflet was a propaganda venture the results of which were difficult to forecast. The E.C. are further of the view that the Publicity Committee made every effort to effectively circulate the leaflet. Cde. Ambridge did not wish to cast any slur on the Publicity Committee who had done the best they could in the circumstances. He blamed the E.C. for allowing them to attempt something which was almost impossible. He thought Branches generally should have been more on their toes in this matter.

Comrade McLaughlin, Publicity Cttee, said that they had been extremely busy with various aspects of their work which had prevented them from giving the E.C. more information regarding the distribution of these leaflets. A considerable number had been sent to Universities when they opened up in October, and that although routier cafes are supposed to be non-political there is nevertheless political discussion there, particularly when there is political unrest. Transport drivers carry them on to other places. Altogether 7,000 leaflets were sent to France, 3,000 being retained here. Most of the latter have been used, some distributed to French students in this country and to the French Language School in Kensington. The Brighton Group have had some which will be handed out to French tourists when they come to this country. Comrade Sawyer, for the Committee, added that a certain situation had arisen in France and the Committee wished to take advantage of it - new ideas have to be tried and the Committee considered that the effort had been worth while. It had been a useful experiment and had brought some results.

Resolution Carried 13 - 11

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Publicity Swansea: "Organisation and purpose of Party Publicity".

Comrade Sawyer said that two points should be stressed about what the Publicity Committee is doing in relation to publicity. A lot of members seemed to judge their work in a rather superficial way. The prime purpose of publicity is to publicise the Party - to get the Party known, and the results should not be judged merely by the number of replies which were received. Advertisements are placed carefully and they have cut down their expenditure. Regarding the small advertisements in the "Guardian", "Tribune", "New Statesman" etc, we get replies from these which are dealt with as follows: - There is an initial reply when the appropriate literature is sent. A circular is also sent which has a provision for the contact to apply either to join the Party, to take up a subscription to the "S.S." or to ask for further information. There is no question of these people just being sent literature and then staying on files. We send to our Northern and Southern Groups Organisers any replies which are in their areas and to Branches for follow up. The Publicity Cttee's advertisements last year resulted in 70 subscribers to the "S.S." and about 15 subscribers to the Western Socialist. Last year 32 members joined the Party and the Publicity Cttee. have found that 19 of them joined through advertisements. The comrade who is designing the front cover of the "S.S." joined through an advert. in the "Guardian". We get good results from a planned programme, placing adverts. on a regular basis. From January to



June 1968 there were 283 replies to advertisements and 53 general enquiries (which may or may not have been due to adverts.) = 336. Our main problem is there are too few members doing this work and we need other help. This is the reason why we cannot always find time to get out full reports to the E.C.

Comrade Meredith, for Brighton Group, confirmed that they receive from the Publicity Cttee. lists of contacts in their area. They are written to and invited to their meetings for discussion, and a Party member is always willing to call on them if they wish. Birmingham Branch also confirmed their close contact with the Publicity Committee.

Comrade Ambridge, Swansea, considered that publicity for the Party can best be obtained by increasing the sales of the "S.S.". We have spent £422 on publicity but we are not told how many new subscribers to the "S.S." have been received. We tend to content ourselves with small advertisements which are not justified by results. He drew attention to the recent full-page advert. in the "New Statesman" which resulted in approx. 700 replies. He recommended delegates to consider the idea of spending approx. £500 a year on one or two large adverts, even if they require a general whip up to find the money. But whatever form of advert. we decided on all replies to enquiries should contain a subscription form to the "S.S."

#### PROPAGANDA

#### ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Westminster: "Assessment of the value of costly indoor meetings at the present time and the possibility of utilising moneys so spent in other ways".

The value of the ever-increasing cost of large indoor meetings was questioned by several delegates who thought that these meetings should be limited to one or two a year and then well advertised. A member of the Propaganda Committee asked delegates to urge their Branches to send in Forms E. so that the Committee has a clearer idea of what propaganda activity is being carried on.

Comrade May, Westminster, said that money, as always, was one problem and the other is, of course, to speak to as many people as possible. He instanced a meeting at H.O. on "In Place of Strife" on which the Party spent £20. We had approx. 30 people, 20 of them being members, so that we spent £20 to speak to 10 people. At the "Three Horseshoes", Hampstead, we ran a series of meetings which cost about £33. We spoke to 20 to 25 non-members and received £10 in collections. We had a public meeting at Friends House, Euston Road, on Education, which could be called a success. There were about 100 people there of whom 60 were non-members, and the total cost of advertising, hall hire etc. was about £40. What is the answer? On average, the cost of speaking to a non-member is sometimes 20/-. He thought that both H.O. and Branches should be more selective in the titles of meetings they put forward and careful as to the number of meetings we ran. In past years we have had ten a year. We have had two successful large meetings this year and there is no harm, therefore, in resting on our laurels for a while. Consider the 15/- to 30/- we sometimes spend to speak to a non-member - with this money we could send out 30 copies of the "S.S." by post. He thought it much better to send, if possible, the appropriate "S.S." containing the answer to the points people raise than to spend about 20/- to speak to one member. He suggested that the Party should break new ground by writing to people who write to newspapers. He thought the Party should seriously consider whether we are getting value for money with most of the indoor meetings we have been running recently.

Various points arose in discussion - the clash of Branch and Public meetings which coincided with Branch meetings, thus limiting the support of Party members. Birmingham Branch have found that indoor meetings have met with no response and they consider that printed publicity is better. More members should make a point of attending other people's meetings, which meant no cost to the Party. Manchester Branch make a public meeting of their Branch night, each member of the Branch having an individual copy of the Minutes so that the minimum of time is spent on routine matters. A plea was made for more indoor meetings at Branches.

One member said he thought too much stress was laid on the fact that we spend a lot of money to talk to too few people - but what about the cost of the "S.S." on which we make a considerable loss every year, but we go on publishing it, although Forms A. did not roll in. If money is to be the criterion you can assail all aspects of the Party's work. You are faced with the unknown factor but you do not curtail all activity because it is uncertain.



Printing Investigation Committee. Two reports from this Committee were before the Conference, one of 30th September and one of 27th March, giving the Committee's views as to the possibilities in this direction and the probable cost to the Party of organising our own printing at H.O. There was little discussion, however, in view of the fact that the report of 27th March had not yet been discussed by the E.C. and because, in any case, delegates felt that more information was still needed before the matter could be properly considered. The general feeling seemed to be that we should not rush this matter.

#### RESOLUTION

Manchester: "This Conference recognises that the ruling class in State Capitalist Russia stands in the same relationship to the means of production as does the ruling class in any other capitalist country (viz. it has a monopoly of those means of production and extracts surplus value from the working class) and is therefore a capitalist class".

Comrade Crump, Manchester, said the issue here was not whether or not Russia was State Capitalist - all members were agreed on that - but is the ~~ruling~~ class in Russia a Capitalist class. His Branch felt that the way the Party tended to speak about the Russian ruling class reflected a weakness in our theory of "State Capitalism" and "Social Class": it seemed that we were not prepared to face up to calling the ruling class in Russia, capitalist. Those who were against this had argued that "Capitalist" has come to have a more or less definite meaning in socialist discussion over the years - those who were direct employers or investors in shares or Government Bonds. But this was not necessarily so. The Capitalist Class were those who monopolised the means of production and accumulated capital. It was irrelevant that the Russian rulers may have led spartan lives. They were a capitalist class, even though they were not direct employers, because they monopolised the means of production and accumulated capital.

Comrade Hardy urged the Conference to go slow on the Manchester resolution that seemed to say that in Russia the top political and managerial people were the Capitalist Class because they were the rulers. Marx held that a capitalist was a person who owned enough money and commodities to have a business employing hired labour. There were various types of capitalist - the small working capitalist, the larger one carrying out purely capitalist functions, shareholders in joint stock companies, State bondholders, directors. All these made up the Capitalist Class.

Manchester's view was at variance with that put forward by Engels in 'Socialism Utopian and Scientific' on the evolution of State Capitalism. Engels held that when the State took over industry the capitalists would be forced out of control in favour of salaried employees. He took this to be the end of Capitalism, but he was wrong on this.

Private enterprise and investment in Russia were not unimportant and Russian factory managers were themselves involved in it. Millar estimated in 1963 that about a quarter of all industrial (i.e. non-agricultural) investment in Russia went through private or non-official channels. Manchester Branch had suggested that bondholding in Russia was disappearing. It was true that the old forced loans had gone but they had been replaced by savings bonds. The Russian Government had been very successful in building up private savings in this way and paid 3% tax free.

Engels had argued that the capitalists being thrown out of both joint stock companies and State enterprises in favour of salaried employees meant the beginning of the end of Capitalism. But in fact in Britain the capitalists never were entirely replaced and have come back in increasing numbers. One reason for this has been the effect of inflation of workers' incomes. In order to combat this they have enrolled some as directors for the big salaries, pension funds, golden handshakes etc. and other perks. It was not true that in Britain the typical director was a salaried employee; he was a wealthy capitalist. What was the ambition of salaried people in Britain and Russia? To become wealthy capitalists in their own right. They had not only the ambition but also the opportunities. This applied to politicians and even Trade Union leaders as well. It is certain that in Russia, in addition to the one quarter of private capitalism, managers and Party officials were using the set-up to make money on the side. Russia was going through great changes. The question was in what direction? He would suggest tentatively towards the mixed State/private set up - as in Britain.



Comrade Zucconi said that as Djilas had pointed out in his "The New Class", the Russian ruling class had a different background to that in America or Britain. In 1917 most of the capitalists left Russia so that the Bolsheviks had to develop State Capitalism, raising some of the capital through State bonds. It was not correct to say that only those who owned industry or employed labour were capitalists. The bureaucrats in Russia were privileged in that they could use their control of capital to channel surplus value in their own interests. In this there was no difference between them and Paul Cretty. In Russia there was a class enjoying the fruits of the labour of the Russian workers. A capitalist was a capitalist whether he got his surplus value from direct ownership or political control.

Comrade Knight said the top salaried managerial strata were a significant part of the Capitalist Class in Russia. They had a vested interest in exploiting the workers and accumulating capital, not for themselves but also for the State.

Comrade D'Arcy said the resolution was premature. The Party had always avoided saying there was a capitalist class in Russia. We asked not who got the surplus value but where did it come from. It was confusing to say that the bureaucracy were the ruling class because of their nepotism and money-making sidelines. They may be becoming capitalists, but it was wrong to speak as if this had already happened. In Russia the monopoly of the social capital was exercised not by private individuals but by the State. Private enterprise was still illegal in Russia and so could not be carried on properly. The Capitalist Class had not yet emerged. All we could speak of was an embryonic capitalist class which at some later stage would plunder the State industries. Bureaucracy would break down into private wealthy individuals.

Comrade Baldwin. Engels had pointed out in his "Origin of the Family" that the State was not only an instrument of class oppression but also that with the development of industry it tended to become the ideal personification of the Capitalist Class. In Russia in the absence of private capitalists the State had taken over their function. This was why we spoke of State Capitalism there.

Comrade Buick said there were private capitalists in Russia but were they the ruling class? They were not and we might need a new name to describe those who in Russia exploited the workers through political control. The Party had already accepted that a class could own collectively and a chapter in our pamphlet "Russia 1917-67" explains how this was so in Russia. In Russia the individuals who made up this class got an income not as direct employers or as bondholders but from the bloated salaries, perks, bonuses etc. that went with their jobs.

Comrade Cook This was the old argument of where you draw the line between "ownership" and control. The bureaucrats were using their control to become owners. When control was legalised it then became ownership. The question was would what was now illegal in Russia become legalised so that the bureaucrats turned their control into ownership. The situation was fluid.

Comrade Young quoted from Tony Cliff about Trotsky's mistake in equating State ownership with socialism which prevented him realising the State Capitalist nature of Russia. The "official persons" in Russia were a Capitalist Class eating up surplus value.

Comrade Lawrence said it was not a question of the size of a person's income or of whether capital was in private or State form. We should look at the historical background of the Capitalist Class in Russia. Clearly those who monopolised the means of production and accumulated capital were the Russian Capitalist Class. It had been argued that development in Russia would make capitalism there more like that in Britain. But there was no reason why it should. Capitalism in Russia had a different historical background. The State had always dominated and control had always been centralised there. Whereas in Britain the rising bourgeoisie had broken the power of the autocratic State. This had never happened in Russia. Thus we would expect the State to play a dominant role in the development of Capitalism there.

CP 30-3, 10 abstract

The E.C. Report to Conference was adopted on the motion of  
Comrades Rose and Docherty.